



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

1800 Washington Boulevard • Baltimore MD 21230

410-537-3000 • 1-800-633-6101

Martin O'Malley
Governor

Anthony G. Brown
Lieutenant Governor

Shari T. Wilson
Secretary

Robert M. Summers, Ph.D.
Deputy Secretary

March 11, 2009

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh, Chairperson
Members of the House Environmental Matters Committee
House Environmental Matters Committee
Taylor Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21403

Re: Letter of Concern, House Bill 1078: Environment - Permitting Process - Notice Requirements

Dear Delegate McIntosh and Committee Members:

HB 1078: Environment - Permitting Process – Notice Requirements would require the Department of the Environment to send notice by mail to the addresses of residential property owners within a two-mile radius of a proposed permit site during the application process. This applies to permits subject to “contested case” provisions. These are essentially all major permits, and under current state law a party may legally challenge a proposed permit in these areas. They are: air emissions, landfills, incinerators, water discharge, sewage sludge storage, facilities to transport, store, or dispose of hazardous waste or low level nuclear waste. Community notification is a crucial issue and we applaud Delegate Niemann for his efforts to improve community notification.

The Department currently has two major IT projects underway to significantly improve public access to information electronically. These two projects, a web site upgrade and a consolidated electronic database known as EEMS (Enterprise Environmental Management System) will vastly improve the information available. These projects will begin to come on-line in 2010. In the interim, I have asked our staff to identify any ways we can provide better notification electronically until these two new projects are fully implemented.

We support the intent of HB 1078 but are concerned that individual mailings are not the most efficient or cost effective method of notification. At the same time, the Department also acknowledges that a certain segment of the population is not reached through online notification. The Department is looking at ways to streamline the notification process to reach even more residents.



The Honorable Maggie McIntosh
Page Two

Toward this end, the Department would like to work with Delegate Neimann to determine the most effective way to reach and inform residents of new permit applications within their community.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues as you review HB 1078. Please contact me or Heather Barthel, Director of Legislation and Policy, at 410-260-6301 if you would like to discuss any of these issues further.

Sincerely,



Shari T. Wilson
Secretary

Cc: Heather Barthel

